



Department of Justice

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COLOMBIAN TERROR ORGANIZATION LEADER INDICTED FOR TWO SEPARATE HOSTAGE TAKINGS OF U.S. CITIZENS IN 1999 AND 2003

WASHINGTON - A federal grand jury in the District of Columbia has indicted Carlos Marin Guarin, also known as "Pablo," also known as Gustavo Anibal Giraldo Quinchia, a high-ranking member of the terrorist group the National Liberation Army (in Spanish the "Ejercito De Liberacion Nacional," or "ELN" for short), in connection with two separate hostage takings of United States citizens which took place in Colombia in 1999 and 2003, U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor and Patrick Rowan, Assistant Attorney General, National Security Division, U.S. Department of Justice, announced today.

Carlos Marin Guarin, 40, is currently incarcerated in Colombia on other charges. The ELN has been designated a foreign terrorist organization by the Secretary of State of the United States since 1997.

The indictment in the first matter, which was returned on December 4, 2008, alleges that on May 13, 1999, armed members of the ELN kidnapped American citizen Matthew A. Burchell and held him hostage for fifteen months, until August 5, 2000. The ELN told Burchell, and those negotiating for his release, that Burchell had been seized in the hope that a ransom would be paid to the group by a United States or British company.

During his fifteen months of confinement, Burchell was put through two mock executions, bound, taken on long journeys while blindfolded and given numerous death threats. Guarin, then the ELN's Eastern Front Commander, conspired with others to carry out the hostage taking of Burchell. In addition, Guarin acted as the primary negotiator for the ELN throughout the ransom negotiations. The indictment charges Guarin with conspiracy to commit hostage taking and hostage taking (aiding and abetting and causing an act to be done).

The indictment in the second matter, which was returned on December 5, 2008, alleges that on January 21, 2003, Scott A. Dalton, a United States citizen, and Alison Ruth Morris, a British citizen by birth and a United States permanent resident, were working as professional journalists on assignment for The Los Angeles Times in the Arauca province of Colombia, when they were taken hostage and held captive under armed guard for twelve days by the Eastern War Front of the ELN, under the command of Guarin.

During that time, Guarín forced the journalists to interview him. Guarín also caused a letter bearing his nom de guerre “Pablo” to be sent on behalf of the General Command of the ELN to the Reuters international news agency, demanding that the government of Colombia form a commission and undertake certain actions as a condition for the release of the hostages. The hostages were eventually released unharmed. The indictment charges Guarín with conspiracy to commit hostage taking and hostage taking (aiding and abetting and causing an act to be done) and carrying a firearm during a crime of violence. This indictment supersedes a previous indictment that was returned in 2003 and unsealed today.

In announcing the indictments, U.S. Attorney Taylor and Assistant Attorney General Rowan praised the hard work of the FBI’s Miami Extraterritorial Squad, in particular lead case agents Special Agent Christopher Carbonneau and Special Agent Manuel Ortega, as well as Special Agent M. Alexandra Montilla, Supervisory Special Agent Alex Barbeito, Intelligence Analyst Christopher Wright of FBI Miami, FBI Legal Attaché Joseph Jeziorski based in Bogotá, Colombia.

Furthermore, they acknowledged the efforts of Paralegal Nadia Arnett Snoddy of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and Trial Attorney Matthew F. Blue of the Counterterrorism Section of the National Security Division of the Department of Justice and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Brenda J. Johnson and Jeanne M. Hauch, who are prosecuting the case.

The charges contained in these indictments are allegations only and the defendant is presumed innocent until convicted at trial.

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